

TANGLEWOOD EVOLUTION IV TW28

With smart design and even smarter pricing, Tanglewood is out to prove that anyone can afford a dash of luthier-built class. **Alun Lower** finds out more. . .

U s guitarists are a rather lucky bunch, sometimes. It's been so long since we've had any awful entry-level guitars that today's up-and-coming superstars will have no idea of the horrors that their forebears had to endure. Indeed, we live in a time where master luthiers like Patrick James Eggle are designing top quality instruments well within the reach of the common man. And just as Faith enjoys the services of the illustrious Mr. Eggle, Tanglewood has its own genius-at-work in the form of Michael Sanden, who has lent his keen eye and know-how into creating the TW28 CSN.

Part of Tanglewood's Evolution IV Series, the TW28 CSN is taking aim squarely at the top of the budget guitar hill, determined to be crowned its undisputed ruler. Trouble is – guitars are a dime a dozen at this price range now and there are some terrific deals to be found. Can the influence of such a well-respected luthier make all the difference and help the TW28 make a much grander name for itself?

BUILD QUALITY

While sometimes I allow myself to be surprised when reviewing a new guitar, more often than not I'll look it up well in advance so

that I approach the review with as much prior knowledge as possible. Very rarely do I manage to be both prepared and surprised, but that that's exactly what happened on this occasion. The image found on Tanglewood's website for the TW28 CSN is by no means inaccurate, but it definitely doesn't do justice to what is undeniably a handsome guitar and I found myself loading the website back up to make sure I hadn't looked up the wrong model.

Tanglewood has opted for a solid cedar top on this model and while it doesn't have the darkest, richest hue of

a high-end example, it does have a nice tint to it and, more importantly, a good, tight grain. A glance at the internal woodwork reveals a tidy job and it is here the TW28's key feature is concealed – tapered parallel bracing designed by Michael Sanden.

As more experienced guitarists will know, the bracing consists of several pieces of wood

supporting the top of the guitar and is essentially the skeleton that holds your acoustic together, preventing the top from collapsing in on itself from the pressure exerted by the strings. It acts as a literal framework for your guitar's tone, too, but normally the bracing patterns on lower-priced guitars receive much less attention than their more expensive counterparts, so it's exciting to see that Tanglewood has paid great attention to the bracing on the TW28. This particular pattern is notable for its two braces running parallel to the bridge plate (hence the name), intended to result in a more stable and responsive top that prevents any "bellying up" and increases overall sustain. Now, we might be used to reading about these kinds of features in mid-range instruments (and upwards, naturally), but when's the last time you heard anyone go into detail about the bracing of a guitar barely costing over £200?

Aesthetically, the TW28 is also a winner – the use of maple binding is a classy touch that brings an extra dash of luxury to proceedings without resorting to slapping on masses of fake pearl and abalone. Another thing that doesn't get picked up in the images on Tanglewood's website is the beautiful rosewood veneer on the headstock,





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**TANGLEWOOD
 EVOLUTION IV TW28 CSN**

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Manufacturer: Tanglewood
Model: Evolution IV TW28 CSN
Retail Price: £230
Body Size: Dreadnought
Made In: China
Top: Solid cedar
Back and Sides: Mahogany
Neck: Mahogany
Fingerboard: Rosewood
Frets: 20
Tuners: Chrome closed back
Nut Width: 43mm
Scale Length: 650mm
Onboard Electronics: N/A
Strings Fitted: D'Addario EXP 11
Left Handers: Others in the range
Gig Bag/Case Included: No

ACOUSTIC TEST RESULTS

Pros: Wonderfully thought-out guitar with the input from a master luthier
Cons: Nothing to declare here!
Overall: A great sounding guitar for an astonishing price. Your search for a new guitar just got easier.

ACOUSTIC RATING

Build Quality	★★★★★
Sound Quality	★★★★★
Value for Money	★★★★★

5 Stars: Superb, almost faultless.
4 Stars: Excellent, hard to beat.
3 Stars: Good, covers all bases well.
2 or 1 Stars: Below average, poor.

CONTACT DETAILS

Tanglewood Guitars
www.tanglewoodguitars.co.uk



The maple binding is a classy touch bringing an extra dash of luxury



The headstock has a beautiful rosewood veneer finished in a deep gloss

tucked neatly away in the maple binding and finished in a lovely deep gloss. It looks very nice indeed and I genuinely felt as if I was holding a much more expensive instrument.

The back and sides are laminate mahogany as we generally expect at this price range, but it looks far from cheap and has been finished in a decent quality satin that has managed not to leave too much build up around the neck joint. Everything feels smooth, even and perfectly playable and that applies to the quality of the rosewood fingerboard and fretwork too, which although not quite buttery smooth, is a million miles away from the scratchy mess I encounter so often on similarly priced (and even more expensive) guitars.

This is all shaping up extremely well for Tanglewood so far and really the only criticism I can think of with the TW28 is the fact that it's a real beast of a guitar. Smaller-statured players might struggle to wrap their arms around this one – I personally found it much

easier to play when I rested it on my right leg and turned it more to the side, which made strumming a lot more relaxed. But if you're looking at a dreadnought in the first place, chances are the bigger dimensions are exactly what you're looking for. And if you're reading this review with the thought of buying one of these guitars for someone else, just try and bear in mind the person's build and if possible what kind of style they play (or, perhaps, will play) – fingerstyle specialists will likely prefer something a little more manageable.

SOUND QUALITY

Being a dreadnought, the kind of tone we expect here is big, bold and balanced – and the TW28 certainly delivers on those three fronts with aplomb. Projection and volume, for starters, are very good indeed, singing out with strength and confidence. Even when you thrash those strings as hard as you can, the TW28 stays composed and collected.

For my tastes, a spruce

and mahogany combo on an entry-level dreadnought can end up a little topky and shrill, particularly when you're hitting out those big open chords with gusto. That's where the cedar top and the clever bracing system really work their magic. The TW28's tone is just a touch warmer and more open than a spruce-topped example, while staying a little more complex and dynamic than an all-mahogany instrument would sound. It's a really happy middle ground that places emphasis on clarity and versatility.

Sustain is also admirable so I can only assume that this is the Sanden-designed bracing once again proving its worth. I had hours of fun playing through my go-to riffs and songs, seeing how the guitar reacted and looking for any potential criticisms. And honestly, I've got nothing. Granted, an all-solid guitar will yield more complexity and harmonics – but that's obvious and unless this guitar was trying to force the best part of

£500 out of your pocket, that argument really can't come into it.

CONCLUSION

As someone who normally prefers orchestra and grand auditorium bodies on acoustics, I can often find dreadnoughts leaving me a bit cold, but on this occasion I'll admit to being pleasantly surprised. If I was on a budget and looking to expand my collection tomorrow I think I would stop my search right here. For the money, you're getting a charming and responsive instrument that has much to offer aspiring songwriters and guitar enthusiasts alike. You just can't go far wrong with a combination of good looks, great construction, and dependable, expressive tones. The TW28 CSN has all that in spades and even comes with that added mojo of having a real luthier involved in the design process. It's a noticeable difference and ensures that this guitar comes highly recommended.

Alun Lower